

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7377
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USUN NEW YORK 739
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 KABUL 2838

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, PGOV, AF
SUBJECT: FIRST QUARTER POLITICAL ASSESSMENT: CONTINUITY AND
CONFIDENCE ARE THEMES AS AFGHAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY
ACCELERATES

1. SUMMARY: POLITICAL ACTIVITY ON THE FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC FRONTS
PICKED UP MARKETDLY DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1978. A PRE-
SIDENTIAL TRIP TO SEVERAL COUNTRIES UNDERScoreD AFGHANISTAN'S
COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLES OF NON-ALIGNMENT, AS WELL AS TO IM-
PROVED RELATIONS WITH ITS SOUTH ASIAN NEIGHBORS. AS A RESULT OF
PRESIDENT MOHAMMAD DAOUD'S STOP IN PAKISTAN, THE TWO COUNTRIES'
BILATERAL RELATIONS MAY NOW BE AT A THIRTY-YEAR HIGH, A DEVELOP-
MENT WHICH BOTH COUNTRIES APPEAR GENUINELY TO SUPPORT. AFTER HIS
RETURN, DAOUD MADE AN UNPRECEDENTED PUBLIC RELATIONS TRIP THROUGH
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THE PUSHTUN TRIBAL REGIONS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCES, WHICH
COULD CONSTITUTE THE FIRST STEP IN A PERSONAL CAMPAIGN TO TAKE HIS
PROGRAMS TO THE MASSES. HE CONTINUED TO BUILD HIS POLITICAL
FRAMEWORK BY APPOINTING A VICE-PRESIDENT, AND, DESPITE PERSISTENT
RUBMLINGS OF DOMESTIC DISCONTENT AMONGST SOME OF THE POLITI-
CALLY AWARE ELITE, DAOUD DISPLAYED COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN HIS
ABILITY TO CONTROL EVENTS AND PEOPLE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

THUS, WITH THE COMING OF SPRING AND THE MUSLIM NEW YEAR OF 1357, AFGHANISTAN CONTINUES TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVELY ITS POLICIES OF NON-ALIGNMENT AND "GOOD NEIGHBORLINESS," AND DAOUD APPEARS TO BE INCREASINGLY CONFIDENT IN HIS OWN POSITION, AND IN THE MERITS OF HIS OVERALL PROGRAM FOR THE FUTURE OF HIS COUNTRY. US-AFGHAN RELATIONS CONTINUED TO BE FRIENDLY AND UNRUFFLED. END SUMMARY.

2. EXTERNAL: DAOUD MAKES A SUCCESSFUL ODYSSEY: A FEBRUARY 21-MARCH 8 TRIP BY DAOUD TO YUGOSLAVIA, LIBYA, TURKEY, INDIA, AND PAKISTAN HIGHLIGHTED AFGHANISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE QUARTER. HE RECEIVED PROMISES OF MODESTLY INCREASED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM INDIA, AND PERHAPS SOME MILITARY TRAINING ASSISTANCE FROM TURKEY. ADDITIONALLY, DAOUD WAS ABLE TO DISCUSS WITH NON-ALIGNED LEADERS HIS DESIRE THAT THE COMING (MAY 6-10) MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (NAMCC) AT KABUL BE AS FREE AS POSSIBLE FROM CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.

3. THE HIGHLIGHT OF HIS TRIP WAS A RESOUNDING RECEPTION IN PAKISTAN, WHICH APPEARED TO HAVE FURTHERED THE GROWING AMICABLE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. IT WAS AGREED TO FORM A JOINT MINISTERIAL-LEVEL COMMISSION WHICH IS TO MEET PERIODICALLY TO REVIEW AND RESOLVE BILATERAL PROBLEMS, AND THE TWO SIDES AGREED TO THE REGULAR EXCHANGE OF HIGH-LEVEL VISITS (ALTHOUGH UNSPECIFIED, WE PRESUME THAT THIS WOULD INCLUDE SENIOR PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS). THE ATMOSPHERICS AT THE TIME OF, AND SUB-CONFIDENTIAL

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SEQUENT TO, DAOUD'S VISIT TO PAKISTAN HAVE BEEN POSITIVE, BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER A GENUINE AND LASTING SOLUTION TO THE PUSHTUNISTAN ISSUE CAN BE FOUND IN THE NEAR FUTURE. DAOUD'S PAST IDENTIFICATION AS THE FOREMOST PROPONENT OF THE PUSHTUNISTAN CAUSE GIVES HIM CONSIDERABLE AUTHORITY TO REDUCE THE STRAINS CAUSED BY THIS PROBLEM, BUT HE MUST CONVINCE PUSHTUN TRIBAL LEADERS IN AFGHANISTAN THAT HE IS NOT ABANDONING AFGHANISTAN'S TRADITIONAL CONCERN OVER THE STATUS OF THEIR PUSHTUN BRETHREN BEYOND THE DURAND LINE. THE AFGHANS WILL PROBABLY BE CONTENT TO ALLOW THE ISSUE TO BECOME A BACK-GURNER ITEM FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY HAS EVIDENCE THAT SOME SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN KABUL AND THE AFGHAN COMMUNIST "KHALQ"NHARTY ARE PRIVATELY DISSATISFIED OVER THIS RAPPROCHEMENT.

4. EXTERNAL: NON-ALIGNMENT CONTINUES AS THE BEDROCK OF FOREIGN POLICY: THE FATE OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT OCCUPIED MUCH ATTENTION DURING DAOUD'S STATE VISITS, ESPECIALLY DURING HIS STOP IN YUGOSLAVIA. DISCUSSIONS WITH MARSHAL TITO DISCLOSED A MUTUAL CONCERN REGARDING CUBA'S 1979 CHAIRMANSHIP, AND, AS NOTED ABOVE, UNDERSCORED AFGHAN HOPES THAT NEXT MONTH'S NAMCC MEETING HERE BE FREE OF CONFRONTATION. THE AFGHAN FOREIGN MINISTER IS CURRENTLY ON AN EXTENDED TRIP TO A NUMBER OF NON-ALIGNED

COUNTRIES REPORTEDLY SEEKING SUPPORT FOR THE AFGHAN POSITION THAT THE KABUL MEETING SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO ERUPT IN DISCORD AND CRIPPLING SCHISMS. IN THIS REGARD, THE AFGHANS HAVE STRUCK A STRICTLY NEUTRAL STANCE CONCERNING THE INTER-ARAB DISPUTE, AND IT IS PROBABLY SIGNIFICANT THAT DAOUD RECENTLY RETURNED FROM STATE VISITS TO SAUDI ARABIA, EGYPT, AND KUWAIT, PERHAPS PARTIALLY TO COUNTER-BALANCE HIS EARLIER STOP IN TRIPOLI.

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5. EXTERNAL: RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. REMAIN GOOD: OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS HAVE SUFFERED NO SERIOUS SETBACKS DURING THE QUARTER, ALTHOUGH FOREIGN MINISTER WAHEED ABDULLAH HAS PRIVATELY MADE IT CLEAR TO US THAT THE GOA WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED WHEN PRESIDENT CARTER HAD TO POSTPONE HIS INVITATION FOR DAOUD TO VISIT THE U.S. THIS SUMMER. THE PRESENTATION OF THE SOMEWHAT CRITICAL UNCLASSIFIED VERSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT FOR AFGHANISTAN TO THE CONGRESS, COUPLED WITH THE UNAVOIDABLE OPEN-ENDED POSTPONEMENT OF DAOUD'S STATE VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES CONTAIN THE POTENTIAL FOR POSSIBLE DIFFICULTY. NEVERTHELESS, THE MUTED AND UNDERSTANDING AFGHAN RESPONSE THUS FAR ON BOTH THESE ISSUES HAS ENABLED OUR GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP TO CONTINUE. THE NARCOTICS FRONT FEATURED A MIXED BAG: ONE THE ONE HAND, THE GOA

REPORTED THAT IT HAD ACHIEVED SOME REDUCTION IN POPPY CULTIVATION
IN ONE REGION WHERE A MAJOR USAID PROJECT (CENTRAL HELMAND)
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EXISTS, WHILE, ON THE OTHER, THE DISCOVERY OF POPPY CULTIVATION
WITHIN A SMALLER USAID-FUNDED PROJECT AREA (DAUG JUI IN KONAR
PROVINCE) HAS RESULTED IN THE CANCELLATION OF THE SCHEDULED
U.S. AID OF ABOUT \$40,000 FOR THAT PARTICULAR PROGRAM SEGMENT.

6. INTERNAL: DAOUD GOES TO THE PEOPLE: IN AN EPISODE REMINISCENT
OF AMERICAN POLITICAL BARNSTORMING CAMPAIGNS, PRESIDENT DAOUD
SPENT TEN DAYS IN MARCH DELIVERING SPEECHES, PRESSING THE FLESH,
KISSING BABIES, AND HUGGING TRIBAL ELDERS IN AFGHANISTAN'S
EASTERN PUSHTUN PROVINCES. DAOUD'S SERIES OF ADDRESSES CONSTITUTE
THE CLEAREST ENUNCIATION OF "DAOUDISM" SINCE THE 1973 REVOLUTION.
DAOUD EXPLAINED,
INTER ALIA, THE NEED FOR SACRIFICES AND CO-
OPERATION IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE HIS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GOALS.
HE ALSO CALLED FOR AN END TO ETHNIC AND CLASS CHAUVINISM, AND
FOR A FEELING OF COMMON IDENTITY AMONG ALL THE PEOPLES OF AFGHAN-
ISTAN. THIS VIRTUALLY UNPRECEDENTED PUBLIC EXPOSURE REPRESENTED
A SHARP CONTRAST TO DAOUD'S TRADITIONALLY ALOOF AND WITHDRAWN
STYLE OF LEADERSHIP, AND THE EPISODE COULD INDICATE THAT THE REGIME
HAS DECIDED TO INVEST MORE OF THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL PRESTIGE
AND ENERGY TO SOLICIT MASS SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAMS OF THE
"REPUBLICAN ORDER." A MORE "POPULIST" PRESIDENT WAS ALSO THE
GENERAL MEDIA THEME AT THE TIME OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY
OF DAOUD'S INAUGURATION IN FEBRUARY. COMMENT: UNTIL THIS RECENT
OUTBURST OF UPBEAT PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY, THE GOVERNMENT-CON-
TROLLED AFGHAN PRESS HAS BEEN UTILIZED REMARKABLY SELDOM FOR
PROPAGANDA PURPOSES. THE PROPAGANDA ARTICLES WHICH DID APPEAR
IN THE PAST WERE USUALLY THIN AND PROBABLY INEFFECTIVE. END
OF COMMENT.

7. INTERNAL: DAOUD NAMES A VICE PRESIDENT: FORMER FINANCE
MINISTER SYED ABDULILAH WAS APPOINTED VICE PRESIDENT ON FEBRUARY
19, AND THEREBY APPEARS TO BE DAOUD'S LIKELY CHOSEN SUCCESSOR.
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ALTHOUGH ABDULILAH HAS SOME POLITICAL HANDICAPS, INCLUDING HIS
YOUTH (33), HIS RELATIVE LACK OF EXPERIENCE, AND NO DISCERNIBLE
INDEPENDENT POLITICAL BASE, HIS STATUS AS DAOUD'S TRUSTED, DE
FACTO ADOPTED SON, AS WELL AS THE PORK BARREL POSSIBILITIES
AFFORDED BY THE VICE PRESIDENCY, WILL PROBABLY INCREASE HIS
SUCCESSION CHANCES THE LONGER HE REMAINS IN HIGH OFFICE AND
RECEIVES THE BENEFITS OF DAOUD'S TUTELAGE, PROMOTION, AND PRO-

TECTION. THE APPOINTMENT ALSO REPRESENTS ONE FURTHER STEP IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF DAOUD'S POLITICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE COUNTRY -- AND AN INDICATION THAT DAOUD INTENDS TO PASS RESPONSIBILITY TO A YOUNGER GENERATION OSTENSIBLY SHARING HIS VIEWS.

8. INTERNAL: RUMORS OF CABINET CHANGES WANE: REPORTS OF AN IMMINENT AND WIDESPREAD CABINET SHAKEUP (WHICH HAD CURCULATED THROUGHOUT THE LAST MONTHS OF 1977) ABATED DURING THE PAST QUARTER, ALTHOUGH STORIES OF UPCOMING TRANSFERS AND SACKINGS ARE STILL HEARD. THE ABSENCE OF ANY WHOLESAL CHANGES IN THE WAKE OF LAST NOVEMBER'S CABINET CRISIS UNDERSCORES DAOUD'S CONFIDENCE THAT HE CAN CONTROL THE DOMESTIC SITUATION UNDER VIRTUALLY ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, AND HIGHLIGHTS HIS ABILITY TO PERSUADE OR COERCE DISCONTENTED SUBORDINATES. DAOUD'S RELATIVELY EXTENSIVE RECENT FOREIGN TRAVELS INDICATE HE FEELS NO DOMESTIC THREAT FROM WITHIN THE HIGHER RANKS OF THE GOVERNMENT. TO WESTERN EYES, HOWEVER, IT IS NEAR SCANDALOUS THAT DAOUD HAS BEEN SO DILATORY IN FILLING THE REAL OR DE FACTO VACANT CABINET POSITIONS IN THE PLANNING, EDUCATION, AND FINANCE MINISTRIES. FURTHERMORE, THE TORTOISELIKE PACE BEING DISPLAYED BY DAOUDISTS IN THEIR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PARTY OF THE NATIONAL REVOLUTION (PNR), THE SINGLE PARTY AUTHORIZED BY THE CONSTITUTION, MAKES ONE WONDER WHETHER THEY WILL BE READY IN TIME FOR THE 1979 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. ACCORDING TO INTELLIGENCE REPORTS, ONLY 52 MEMBERS HAVE BEEN SIGNED UP THUS FAR.

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CORRECTED COPY PARANBRS (TO READ 9, 10, 11, 12
VICE 10, 11, 12, 13)

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9. INTERNAL: SECURITY REMAINS AN ISSUE: IN FEBRUARY, THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THE RESULTS OF ITS INVESTIGATION OF LAST NOVEMBER'S KILLING OF PLANNING MINISTER KHURRAM, AND DECLARED THAT IT WAS A PART OF A LARGER PLOT AIMED AT DAOUD AND OTHER MINISTERS AS WELL. THE PLOTTERS WERE REPORTED TO HAVE HAD TIES WITH THE ULTRA RIGHT-WING "IKHWAN-E-MUSLIMIN" (MUSLIN BROTHERHOOD), IN LEAGUE WITH WHAT THE PRESS CALLED "ALIENS" (AFGHAN OFFICIALS LATER TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT BORDER CROSSERS FROM PAKISTAN WERE INVOLVED). BY VEILING THE IDENTITY OF THE ALLEGED FOREIGN CONSPIRATORS, THE AFGHAN REGIME HAS AVOIDED DAMAGE TO ITS BILATERAL RELATIONS, BUT HAS BROADCAST THE MESSAGE THAT THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT WILL BROOK NO INTERFERENCE IN THIS COUNTRY FROM THOSE
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REACTIONARY ACTIVISTS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN STIRRING UP TROUBLE IN NEIGHBORING MUSLIM COUNTRIES. THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT ALSO CONTAINED FIRM WARNINGS TO ANY POTENTIAL REACTIONARY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS WITHIN AFGHANISTAN. THIS PROBABLY REFLECTED THE AUTHORITIES' CONVICTION THAT, JUST AS THROUGHOUT AFGHAN HISTORY, THE MOST FORMIDABLE POTENTIAL OPPOSITION STEMS FROM THE FAR RIGHT OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL SPECTRUM.

10. INTERNAL: LAW-AND-ORDER CAMPAIGN CONTINUES: IN FEBRUARY, THE GOVERNMENT MAINTAINED ITS LAW-AND-ORDER CAMPAIGN BY HANGING EIGHT CRIMINALS CONVICTED OF CRIMES RANGING FROM MURDER TO EXTORTION. THE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF THESE EXECUTIONS KEPT THE POPULACE AWARE THAT THE AUTHORITIES WERE ALERT AND FIRM, AND THAT RUMORS OF AN UNCONTROLLED CRIME RATE WERE UNFOUNDED. ON THE OTHER HAND, LAST SEPTEMBER'S MURDER OF ARIAT PILOT GRAN (BELIEVED BY MANY TO HAVE BEEN GOVERNMENT ARRANGED) REMAINS UNREPORTED AND UNSOLVED. IN THIS REGARD, ONE OF THE RECENTLY EXECUTED CRIMINALS (GHULAM HAZARAT) WAS RUMORED TO HAVE BEEN THE TRIGGER MAN IN THE GRAN KILLING; AND THE RUMOR MILL HAS DESCRIBED HIS HANGING AS A DELIBERATE ACT TO SILENCE THIS POTENTIALLY DAMAGING SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

11. INTERNAL: HUMAN RIGHTS: DURING THE QUARTER, THE EMBASSY LEARNED FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE THAT SOME 187 PERSONS FROM SEVEN SEPARATE POST-1973 "COUNTER-COUP/ ATTEMPTS ARE STILL BEING HELD BY THE DAOUD REGIME (THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE THOSE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE KHURRAM KILLING). ALTHOUGH THIS NUMBER IS SMALL WHEN COMPARED WITH THE NUMBERS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS BEING HELD IN OTHER COUNTRIES OF THIS REGION -- AND PROBABLY INCLUDES SOME

PERSONS WHO COMMITTED SERIOUS CRIMES AGAINST LIFE AND PROPERTY,
IT ILLUSTRATES THE RISKINESS OF ENGAGING IN OPPOSITION HERE. ON
THE POSITIVE SIDE, HOWEVER, THE LEGAL REFORM PROGRAM CONTINUED
TO PROGRESS. THROUGH A SERIES OF LEGAL SEMINARS, PROVINCIAL
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OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED TO NEW LAWS AND PROCEDURES DE-
SIGNING TO MODERNIZE AFGHANISTAN'S LEGAL SYSTEM.

12. CONCLUSIONS: ACTIVITY ON BOTH THE FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC
POLITICAL FRONTS PICKED UP DURING THIS QUARTER. DAOUD'S FOREIGN
AND DOMESTIC TRIPS UNDERSCORED THIS COUNTRY'S COMMITMENT TO NON-
ALIGNMENT AND HINTED STRONGLY THAT AFGHANISTAN WILL USE THE
MAY NAMCC MEETING IN KABUL TO INCREASE ITS STATUS WITHIN THE
MOVEMENT. RAPPROCHEMENT WITH PAKISTAN, AND IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH
OTHER SOUTH ASIAN NEIGHBORS, CONSTITUTED THE SECOND MAJOR THEME
OF AFGHAN FOREIGN POLICY DURING
THE PERIOD. ON THE DOMESTIC
SCENE, DAOUD HAS LAUNCHED A PROMISING "MEET THE PEOPLE" PROGRAM,
WHICH, IF CARRIED FORWARD, COULD INDICATE THAT THEREGIME HAS
DECIDED TO INVEST MORE OF THE PRESIDENT'S PRESTIGE AND ENERGY
TO GAIN POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE VARIOUS SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND
REFORM PROGRAMS HIS GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO PROMOTE. DAOUD CON-
TINUES TO BUILD HIS POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, AND, AS HE NEARS THE
COMPLETION OF HIS FIFTH YEAR IN POWER, HIS CONFIDENCE IN HIS
ABILITY TO CONTROL EVENTS AND PEOPLE SEEMS COMPLETE, AS IT HAS
BEEN THROUGHOUT HIS LONG CAREER.
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